

The University of Chicago

HERMAN MELVILLE
AUTHOR AND NEW YORKER, 1844-1851

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE
AND LITERATURE
1936

By
LUTHER STEARNS MANSFIELD

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PREFACE

In the preparation of this study, I have consulted manuscripts in the Metcalf Collection of the Harvard University Library and in the Duyckinck Collection and the Gansevoort-Lensing Collection of the New York Public Library. I am especially indebted to Mrs. Eleanor Melville Metcalf, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, for permission to use letters, journals, and annotated books which she has given to the Harvard University Library or deposited there, and for comment and suggestions about the study. To Miss Weeks, of the Manuscript Division of the New York Public Library I owe much for her aid and assistance in finding manuscript material which might otherwise have escaped my notice.

The location of the manuscripts referred to in this study has been indicated by the following system of symbols, which have, where possible, been inserted in the footnotes immediately after the date of the material referred to:

- (M) The Metcalf Collection of manuscripts by and pertaining to Herman Melville, given by his granddaughter, Mrs. Eleanor Melville Metcalf, to the Harvard University Library.
- (D) The Duyckinck Collection of literary and personal correspondence, diaries, notebooks, etc., in the New York Public Library, which includes letters of Evert A. Duyckinck, George L. Duyckinck, Herman Melville, Cornelius Mathews, William Allen Butler, William Alfred Jones, Nathaniel Hawthorne, George J. Adler, and others. In all references to material in this collection I have used the

initials E.A.D. and G.L.D. to refer to the Duyckinck brothers.

(G-L) The Gansevoort-Lansing Collection of letters and other manuscript material of the Gansevoort, Lansing, and Melville families, in the New York Public Library.

All references to Melville's works are to the Standard Edition, published by Constable and Company, London, 1922-23. Throughout the customary abbreviations DNE and DAB are used for the Dictionary of National Biography and the Dictionary of American Biography, and I have referred to the following three books by the surname of the author only:

Minnigerode, Meade. Some Personal Letters of Herman Melville and a Bibliography. New York: The Brick Row Book Shop, 1922.

Paltsits, Victor Hugo. Family Correspondence of Herman Melville, 1830-1904, in the Gansevoort-Lansing Collection. New York: New York Public Library, 1929.

Weaver, Raymond M. Herman Melville, Mariner and Mystic. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921.

Manuscript material printed in these three books has been checked with the original, with the result that some minor variations of spelling and punctuation occur in passages quoted in this study.

The journal Melville kept on his trip to Europe in 1849, which is preserved in the Metcalf Collection of Harvard University Library, I have referred to throughout simply as Journal.

VIII. SOME ASPECTS OF MELVILLE'S READING

During the seven years of his great creative period, from 1844 to 1851, Herman Melville must have done a tremendous amount of reading. References in his letters and in the 1849 Journal and the entries in Evert Duyckinck's notebook of "Books Lent" of books he borrowed from this friend furnish but a partial list. A few volumes known to have been in Melville's possession before the end of 1851 survive, and reviews by Melville in the Literary World supply additional titles.

References in Melville's works published during this period suggest other books he must have read. But it is unwise to regard literary allusions in such a book as Redburn, dealing with the author's experiences some dozen years before it was written, as referring to that earlier time, however much they may indicate about his literary background in 1849. Pierre, likewise, is so obviously fiction, with a few strands of autobiography difficult to pick out, that literary allusions there can throw no certain light on Melville's reading at any period earlier than that devoted to the actual writing of the book. Citations of titles and mentions of characters from literature give no certain proof that Melville read the works suggested, for much of his knowledge of literature and philosophy and history was doubtless gained from reading reviews or from conversation with some friend of literary interest, Duyckinck, Adler, or Hawthorne. It may, however, be assumed that Melville read the books he reviewed, borrowed, or bought

That Melville had an early if somewhat casual acquaintance

with many of the authors he later knew well and loved is indicated by his "Fragments from a Writing Desk," written before he was twenty and published in the Democratic Press, and Lansingburgh Advertiser.¹ Although he alluded in these affected essays to several plays of Shakespeare and quoted from Romeo and Juliet, Melville, according to his own statement, but vaguely knew and appreciated Shakespeare before 1849. Writing from Boston to his friend Duyckinck in February of that year, just a few days after the birth of his son Malcolm, he explained his altered attitude:

I have been passing my time very pleasantly here. But chiefly in lounging on a sofa (a la the poet Grey) & reading Shakspeare. It is an edition in glorious great type, every letter whereof is a soldier, & the top of every "t" like a musket barrel. Dolt & ass that I am I have lived more than 29 years, & until a few days ago, never made close acquaintance with the divine William. Ah, he's full of Sermons-on-the mount, and gentle, aye, almost as Jesus. I take such men to be inspired. I fancy that this mount [sic] Shakspeare in heaven ranks with Gabriel Raphael and Michael. And if another Messiah ever comes twill be in Shakspeare's person.--I am mad to think how minute a cause has prevented me hitherto from reading Shakspeare. But until now, any copy that was come-atable to me, happened to be in a vile small print unendurable to my eyes which are tender as young sperms. But chancing to fall in which this glorious edition, I now exult over it, page after page.²

¹Two essays published May 4 and 18, 1839, and, so far as known, preserved only in Melville's autographed clippings (M). Weaver prints most of these early rhapsodic writings, pp. 115-25. The quotation from Romeo and Juliet in the second essay is

"See how she leans her cheek upon her hand;
Oh! that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might kiss that cheek!"

²Melville's letter to E.A.D., February 24, 1849 (D). The edition referred to is preserved among Melville's books in the possession of Mrs. Osborne, his granddaughter: The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare; with a Life of the Poet, and Notes, Original and Selected (Boston: Hilliary, Gray & Co., 1837), seven volumes. The life of Shakespeare in the first volume is signed "J. Payne Collier, London, May 20, 1835"; it is presumable that the notes are also by Collier. The Alphabetical and Analytical Catalogue of the New York Society (New York: R. Craighead, 1850) listed as the only Shakespeare which might be taken out of the library an eight volume edition by Collier (London, 1842). The Society Library possessed in 1850 two other complete sets of his works and twelve volumes of Shakespeare Society Publications for 1841 and 1842.

In the same letter Melville mentioned having heard Fanny Kemble Butler's dramatic readings of Macbeth and Othello in Boston.³ Perhaps his interest in Shakespeare was thus reawakened and he sought at once to procure a good edition and reread the plays for himself. Alluding to her husband's divorce suit then pending, Melville commented on Mrs. Butler:

She makes a glorious Lady Macbeth, but her Desdemona seems like a boarding school miss. -- She's so unfemininely masculine that had she not, on unimpeachable authority, borne children, I should be curious to learn the result of a surgical examination of her person in private. The Lord help Butler. . . . I marvel not he seeks being amputated off from his matrimonial half.⁴

Mrs. Butler hated the role of Lady Macbeth, partly because she felt unequal to matching the success of her aunt, Sarah Siddons, as that character, and once said of her own performance, "I played like the clever girl I am, but was about as much like Lady Macbeth as the Great Mogul."⁵ Obviously, Melville would have disagreed

³According to advertisement in the Boston Evening Transcript, Mrs. Butler's course of readings at the Masonic Temple (tickets fifty cents for each evening) began with The Tempest, January 26, 1849, and ended with the same play, February 21, 1849. Other plays included were: Midsummer Night's Dream, January 29; Much Ado About Nothing, January 31; The Merchant of Venice, February 2; King Lear, February 5; King John, February 7; Henry the Eighth, February 9; Macbeth, February 12; Romeo and Juliet, February 14; Hamlet, February 16; Othello, February 19. Several articles of praise appeared during the series of readings, and in the issue of February 22, 1849, the Transcript critic, eulogizing Mrs. Butler extravagantly, selected as her best readings: Hamlet, The Merchant of Venice, Henry the Eighth, and As You Like It. In the same issue a short article headed "The Butler Divorce Case," quoted from the London Spectator a comment favoring Fanny Kemble against her husband, Pierce Butler, who was branded as a cruel, heartless man. According to DAB, her choosing Rufus Choate as her lawyer gave additional notoriety to the case.

⁴Melville to E.A.D., February 24, 1849 (D). Melville mentioned only the two plays; he very likely did not attend the reading of Hamlet, for it came on the very day that his son Malcolm was born; but since he was in Boston during the entire course, he may have heard several of the others.

⁵See DAB, X, 316. See also N. P. Willis, Hurrygraphs; or Sketches of Scenery, Celebrities and Society, Taken from Life (New York: Charles Scribner, 1851), p. 185; Willis thought that Mrs.

with her.

Anxious to make still clearer his admiration for Shakespeare, not long after writing this first letter, Melville wrote again to Duyckinck:

Do not think, my boy, that because I, impulsively broke forth in jubilation over Shakespeare, that, therefore, I am of the number of snobs who burn their tuns of rancid fat at his shrine. No, I would stand afar off & alone, & burn some pure Palm oil, the product of some overtopped trunk.--I would to God Shakespeare had lived later, & promenaded on Broadway. Not that I might have had the pleasure of leaving my card for him at the Astor, or made merry with him over a bowl of fine Duyckinck punch; but that the muzzle which all men wore on their souls in the Elizabethan day, might not have intercepted Shakespeare from articulation. For I hold it a verity, that even Shakespeare was not frank to the uttermost. And, indeed, who in this intolerant universe is, or can be? But the Declaration of Independence makes a difference.⁶

American interest in Shakespeare was being intensified during the forties by public lectures on the great Elizabethan such as the series of eight lectures first given in Boston in 1839 by Richard

Butler read Macbeth with "a sort of frantic fury" adapted to "the demand of 'the groundlings' for violence."

⁶Melville's letter to E.A.D., "Saturday, 3d [March, 1849]" (D). The Literary World, VII (November 2, 1850), 348-49, printed an article headed "Shakespeare in America," ostensibly a review of De Quincey's Biographical Essays, but mentioning De Quincey in only one brief paragraph, which says in part: "We have the plays of Shakspeare every night in scores of theatres in city and country, packet ships, halls, hotels, steamboats, sailing, steaming, constantly opening and taking their drinks and dinners in the name of Shakspeare. Shakspeare is not popular in America in fact, he is but imperfectly understood. All our poets, all our prose writers with scarcely an exception, address the public in a style of conception and illustration as foreign to the Shakspearian treatment, as if Shakspeare had never existed"; and quotes from Lander to prove this point: "The vice of the art of this day--literary and pictorial, poetical and prose--authors and readers alike--consists in the excess of fancy and the deficiency of imagination." Three weeks later another article by the same writer (as the second article says) appeared, "Pictures for the People," VII, 411. Obviously written by some one not at the time on the regular staff of the Literary World, these articles may very possibly be by Melville; certainly they express his ideas, and the trick of discussing Shakespeare in a review of De Quincey is suggestive of Melville's reviewing a Cooper novel under the heading "A Thought on Book Binding"; see Literary World, VI (March 16, 1850), 276-77.

Henry Dana and repeated there and in New York and Philadelphia several times during the next decade. Dana's contention that Shakespeare, and not Pope, was the greatest poet of the English language was in opposition to the contention of many authorities.⁷ The Duyckincks were much interested in British drama of all periods, but had a special fondness for the Elizabethans.⁸ Both Duyckincks were later to become editors of Shakespeare.⁹ Returning to the Number 20 group a few weeks after his purchase in Boston of a large-type edition had reintroduced him to the "divine William," Melville no doubt called forth in conversation with his friends their admiration for and knowledge of Shakespeare. In London in December, 1849, with his own loved and much marked edition of the

⁷ See DAB, V, 60. Repetition of these lectures in 1849 brought forth comment from the Boston Evening Transcript, February 2, 1849; Home Journal, March 10, 1849; and Literary World, V (November 17, 1849), 426.

⁸ William Allen Butler, A Retrospect of Forty Years, 1825-1865 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), pp. 202-3, 322-23, recalled the Duyckinck library as especially rich in English drama. Many of E.A.D.'s notebooks, especially four labelled "The British Drama," contain entries which testify to his interest being mainly in the Elizabethans; besides Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster, Dekker, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Ben Jonson (D).

⁹ See George L. Duyckinck (ed.), The Complete Works of Shakespeare . . . with Notes from Collier, Knight, Dyce, and others (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1869).

At the time of his death in 1878, E.A.D. in collaboration with William Cullen Bryant was engaged in an edition of Shakespeare (New York: The Amies Publishing Co., 1888). Some eleven notebooks dated from 1874 to 1878 (D) show the steps of his preparation for this task; separate notebooks were devoted to language, a bibliography of the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy, Coleridge's notes on Shakespeare, Shakespeare titles in the work of later English authors, particularly of the nineteenth century. Abstracts of articles in the great English critical reviews form a great part of the material. An earlier record labelled "Evert A. Duyckinck's Own Note Book 1848" (D) contained original articles on "Massinger & Shakspeare" and "Shakspeare. Contemporary Judgment & in the Eyes of Posterity," which pointed out the aid given toward popular appreciation by Lamb, Hazlitt, Goethe, Coleridge, Schlegel, and other critics. For forty years, various notebook entries testify to E.A.D.'s admiration for Shakespeare and his constant attempt to examine critically the essence of Shakespeare's greatness.

great dramatist left at home,¹⁰ Melville bought a pocket copy of two of Shakespeare's plays.¹¹

Melville's interest in Shakespeare soon spread to include other dramatists of the Elizabethan period. Copies of Ben Jonson, Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher were among the books he purchased in London, though in all probability he knew something of these writers before and was simply availing himself of the opportunity to buy good editions cheaply.¹² Here also his taste was in perfect sympathy with that of his friend Duyckinck.¹³

Literary critics and biographers of Melville have universally recognized the influence of Sir Thomas Browne, which may be traced in his work beginning with Mardi.¹⁴ Many critics have

¹⁰Melville's markings and annotations in this volume, probably made during his first reading, may be significant in suggesting what plays Melville made first acquaintance with in 1849. Macbeth and Richard III are not marked at all; Romeo and Juliet and Othello each have but two sidelings, but no annotation. Probably Melville knew these plays so well before these volumes were purchased that he did not reread them, or gave them only a hasty perusal. Perhaps on the assumption that these plays were not well-known before he read them in this edition can be explained the forty-two marked passages in Antony and Cleopatra, the twenty-two each in Twelfth Night and Measure for Measure, and the twenty-one in Henry VIII; still there are twenty-seven in King Lear and sixteen in Hamlet, both of which were almost as popular on the stage of the 1840's as Macbeth and Othello. Mr. Charles Olson, the discoverer of this possession of Melville's, is planning an article to deal with the markings, annotations, etc., and to outline in a general way what Shakespeare meant to Melville.

¹¹See Melville's Journal, December 17 (M) and the list of books purchased given at the end of the volume.

¹²See Journal, November 14 (M) and book list.

¹³See footnote 8 above. Melville once borrowed works of several Elizabethan dramatists from Duyckinck. See his letter to E.A.D., February, 1862 (D): "I want you to loan me some of those volumes of the Elizabethan dramatists. Is Decker [*sic*] among the set? and Webster? If so, please put them up and let the bearer have them.--Send me any except Marlowe, whom I have read." This was surely a rereading; it would be wrong to imply from Melville's letter that he had never read any of these dramatists before.

¹⁴See Weaver, pp. 17 and 94; Arthur Stedman's Introduction to Typee (New York: American Publishers Corp., 1892), p. xxxii;

thought Melville too slavishly imitative of the great seventeenth-century physician. Melville's first extended reading of Browne came in the winter of 1847-48 while Mardi was in progress; he borrowed the volumes one after another from his friend Duyckinck,¹⁵ who at once reported to his brother:

By the way Melville reads Old Books. He has borrowed Sir Thomas Browne of me and says finely of the speculations of the Religio Medici that Browne is a kind of "crack'd Archangel." Was ever anything of this sort said before by a sailor?¹⁶

By the time Melville was buying books in London, he knew enough about Browne and various editions of his works to pick out a 1686 folio edition.¹⁷

In the contemporaries of the "crack'd Archangel," he also evinced some interest. "Fragments from a Writing Desk" referred to "the identical seat in which old Burton composed his Anatomy of Melancholy."¹⁸ In April, 1847, Melville bought at a bookstore a copy of Burton's work which turned out later to have once been his father's property.¹⁹ When Melville represented himself in

Carl Van Vechten, "Later Work of Herman Melville," Double Dealer, III (January, 1922), 10; F. J. O'Brien, "Our Young Authors--Melville," Putnam's Monthly, I (February, 1853), 156; and E. A. and G. L. Duyckinck, Cyclopedia of American Literature (New York: Charles Scribner, 1855), II, 673, for typical comments on Browne's influence in Melville's works.

¹⁵See E.A.D.'s record of "Books Lent" (D). These entries are undated, but other entries (some of which are dated) indicate that the borrowing was between December, 1847, and March, 1848. Melville read the four volume edition (London: William Pickering, 1835-36), which was heavily annotated in E.A.D.'s hand.

¹⁶E.A.D. to G.L.D., March 18, 1848 (D).

¹⁷See Journal, December 19, and list of books at the end (M).

¹⁸Essay published May 4, 1839; see Weaver, p. 116.

¹⁹This volume (London: Vernon & Hood, Allen & Co., etc., 1802) is now with the books owned by Mrs. Metcalf deposited temporarily in the Harvard University Library. Melville wrote in ink on the title page his name with the date, "April 10th 1847," and

Mardi as "pining for someone who could page me a quotation from Burton on Blue Devils,"²⁰ he was expressing a wish his friend Duyckinck could have fulfilled.²¹ Melville's early adoration of Burton may have owed something to the fact that he was a favorite of his father's; once in a conversation with Duyckinck, "Melville instanced old Burton as atheistical--in the exquisite irony of his passages on some sacred matters,"²² and may have been indebted for a great deal of religious unrest to his pondering of the works of this writer. April 13, 1849, Melville borrowed from the 20 Clinton Place library Thomas Fuller's The Holy and Profane States.²³ Duyckinck's notion of the seventeenth century as "an equal growth of books and men" was having its effect upon Melville's

later beneath a dim pencil signature, "A. Melvill," on a fly leaf, entered: "I bought this book more than four years ago at Gowen's Store in New York. Today, Allan in looking at it, first detected the above pencil signature of my father's; who,--as it now appears--must have had the book, with many others, sold at auction, at least twenty-five years ago.--Strange! Pittsfield July 7th 1851." There are no other annotations or markings.

²⁰I, 3-4.

²¹Scattered through E.A.D.'s notebooks (D) are numerous quotations from the Vezey edition of Burton's works. For the motto of a scrapbook dated March 17, 1867, he used the quotation: "With many such absurd and brain sick questions, intricacies, froth of human wit and excrements of curiosity, &c.," which he acknowledged as coming from "Burton's 'Anat of Melancholy' Vezey's Ed. II. 155."

²²See E.A.D.'s "Jottings," October 1, 1856 (D): "Herman Melville passed the evening with me--fresh from his mountain charged to the muzzle with his sailor metaphysics and jargon of things unknowable. But a good stirring evening--ploughing deep and bringing to the surface some rich fruits of thought and experience--Melville instanced old Burton as atheistical in the exquisite irony of his passages on some sacred matters; cited a good story from the Decameron the Enchantment of the husband in the tree; a story from Judge Edmunds of a prayer meeting of female convicts at Sing Sing which the Judge was invited to witness and agreed to provided that he was introduced where he could not be seen. It was an orgie of indecency and blasphemy." This entry shows the wide range of topics an evening's conversation with Melville often covered.

²³See Duyckinck's "Books Lent" (D). This is one of the few dated entries.

reading.

Four French writers figured prominently in Melville's literary background before he published Moby Dick. First and most important was François Rabelais, who, as Weaver has conjectured, was probably responsible for the fantasy of the latter part of Mardi.²⁴ Rabelais was the first writer whose works Melville borrowed from his friend Duyckinck.²⁵ When the prophecy that in heaven "grim Dante" would forget his Infernos and "shake sides with the fat Rabelais" was penned,²⁶ Melville was probably in the midst of the story of Gargantua and Pantagruel. This early reading of Rabelais interlarded with Sir Thomas Browne²⁷ affected Melville's style for all books he was to write afterward.²⁸ Writing to his New York friend from Boston, Melville announced in April, 1849: "I bought a set of Bayle's Dictionary the other day,

²⁴Weaver, p. 277. Many other critics have shared Weaver's theory.

²⁵See E.A.D.'s "Books Lent" (D). This borrowing can be definitely dated only as after October 13, 1847, and was probably in the following December.

²⁶Mardi, I, 14.

²⁷The third volume of Rabelais and the second volume of Browne were borrowed at the same time. Since the first volume of E.A.D.'s edition of Browne contains a biography and letters, this was probably the first Browne item Melville borrowed; there is no notation of his taking home the first volume. When he came back for the fourth volume of Rabelais he checked out also two more volumes of Browne.

²⁸Melville was hailed as the American Rabelais and some account of his indebtedness to the French author given by Philarette Charles, "Voyages Réels et Fantastique d'Hermann Melville," Révue des Deux Mondes, II (May 15, 1849), 541-70. This article is reprinted in the same author's Etudes sur la littérature et les mœurs des Anglo-Américains aux XIX^e Siècle (Paris: Amyot, 1851), pp. 185-235. A translation with comment was published in the Literary World, V (August 4, 1849), 89-90, and (August 11), 101-3. Of the numerous discussions of Melville and Rabelais, special attention should be called to Whitney Hastings Wells, "Moby Dick and Rabelais," Modern Language Notes, XXXVIII (February, 1923), 123, which quotes some interesting parallel passages.

& on my return to New York intend to lay the great folios side by side & go to sleep on them thro' the summer, with the Phaedon [?] in one hand & some Browne in the other."²⁹ Shortly before he sailed for Europe in 1849, Melville borrowed Cyrano de Bergerac Savinien's Voyage to the Moon,³⁰ and in London he bought a copy of Rousseau's Confessions.³¹ Very possibly other French writers figured in his reading; he may have borrowed their works from the Society Library, where no record of his borrowings survives.³² Melville's writings of this period show no certain and definite influence of Bayle, Cyrano, or Rousseau.

Apparently discussions of German metaphysics with Adler and Taylor on board the "Southampton" and in London and Paris caused Melville's great interest in Carlyle and in German litera-

²⁹Melville to E.A.D., April 5, 1849 (D). The Duyckincks had a five volume folio edition, The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr Peter Bayle, The Second Edition. To which is Prefixed, the Life of the Author by Mr Des Maiseaux (London: J. J. and P. Knapton, etc., 1735-38), and the 1850 catalogue of the Society Library listed Peter Bayle's General Dictionary, Translated by Bernard and others (London, 1734-41), ten volumes folio. Probably both were the same edition differently bound, and very likely Melville, who had every opportunity to know what his friends and the Society Library possessed, chose the same edition. Items on Virgil and Calvin and other quotations in E.A.D.'s notebooks of all periods (D) are credited to Bayle.

³⁰See E.A.D.'s "Books Lent" (D). This borrowing can be dated as between July 20 and September 7, 1849. There is no indication that Melville had read this story of Utopian travels before he wrote Mardi. The New York Library, which through the Lenox Library, came into possession of all of E.A.D.'s and G.L.D.'s books, does not now contain any Duyckinck copy.

³¹See Journal, December 15 (M): "At last succeeded in getting the much desired copy of Rousseau's Confessions for eleven shillings." The purchase was noted in the list of books at the end of the Journal and on a page of annotations made presumably during the return voyage to America, he recorded: "Rousseau a schoolmaster. (2d vol. near beginning) 'could have killed his scholars sometimes.'"

³²Although, according to the 1850 catalogue, the Society Library did not have any of Cyrano's works, Rabelais, Montaigne, and many other French writers whom Melville may have wished to read were on the shelves.

ture in 1850.³³ Goethe's Autobiography and Letters from Italy were purchased in cheap three-shilling editions in London.³⁴ Within a few months after his return to America, Melville called upon his friend Duyckinck to furnish him successively with copies of Jean Paul Richter's Flower, Fruit, and Thorn Pieces,³⁵ of Carlyle's Sartor Resartus and Heroes and Hero Worship,³⁶ of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister,³⁷ and finally of Carlyle's translations of German Romance.³⁸ How many of these titles Melville may have

³³There is no indication that Melville bought or borrowed any books of German literature or any of the works of Carlyle before this time. Perhaps he had read them, and Adler and Taylor served simply to reawaken his interest; however that may be, his 1850 interest in these writers was his first great interest.

³⁴See list of books purchased in London in the back pages of his Journal (M). Melville noted that these books were in H. G. Bohn's popular edition.

³⁵For this and all other borrowings from E.A.D. see "Books Lent" (D). The tenth item E.A.D. listed for 1850; so apparently very soon after Melville's return. E.A.D. had the two volume edition translated by E. H. Noel (London: W. Smith, 1845).

³⁶Borrowed together, the fifteenth and sixteenth borrowings listed for 1850. Both were printed in the Wiley and Putnam "Library of Choice Reading," 1846. Melville probably read them in this edition, although no Duyckinck copy whatsoever of Heroes and Hero-Worship now survives.

³⁷About the middle of 1850, perhaps just before the Melvilles went to Pittsfield for the summer. The notation is for a three volume edition, which has not survived, and was probably disposed of after Carlyle's translation in two volumes (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, & Fields, 1851) was added to the library.

³⁸One of a group of books probably borrowed in September, 1850, while Melville was in New York for a brief period before the final removal to Pittsfield. The inscribed Duyckinck copy, the only one in the New York Public Library, is German Romance: Specimens of its Chief Authors: with Biographical and Critical Notices, by Thomas Carlyle (Boston: J. Munroe, 1841), two volumes. Volume one contains Johann August Musäus' "Dumb Love," "Libussa," and "Melechsala"; Friedrich de la Motte Fouque's "Aslauga's Knight"; and Ludwig Tieck's "The Fair Haired Eckbert," "The Trusy Eckart," "The Runenberg," "The Elves," and "The Goblet." The second volume contains E. T. W. Hoffmann's "The Golden Pot"; Jean Paul Friedrich Richter's "Army Chaplain Schmelzle's Journey to Platz," with a running commentary of notes, and "Life of Quintus Fizzlein. Extracted from Fifteen Letter-Boxes."

read before can only be conjectured. Duyckinck had been concerned with the publication of Parke Godwin's translation of Goethe's Autobiography in 1846, and had made several diary entries about Goethe's life and thought during 1847. The Literary World was full of articles on Goethe and Jean Paul Richter, whom the Duyckincks rated great,³⁹ and contained reviews favorable and unfavorable about Carlyle, whom they found interesting even when they questioned his style or his thought.⁴⁰ The Society Library could supply in abundance the books of all three writers to curious subscribers.⁴¹ The effect of Melville's immersion in literature of this type (whether or not for the first time) became immediately apparent when Moby Dick was published.⁴²

Surely with the Duyckincks' admiration of Lamb so unrestrained, Melville must early have become acquainted with his works. The account of Melville's visit to Edward Moxon and their conversation given in the Journal suggests that Melville was in November, 1849, able to do more than listen intelligently to

³⁹Richter was also popular outside the Duyckinck circle. Within a few months, the Home Journal printed several articles of extracts and summaries of Flower, Fruit, and Thorne Pieces; see issues of July 17, August 28, October 22, November 13, 1847.

⁴⁰Underlinings in the first part of the second volume of German Romance testify to E.A.D.'s interest in Carlyle's diction; words marked include "prelections," "transcendental," "assiduity," "dilettante," "stinted," "variegated," "filched," "stagnation," "driveller," "amanuensis," "chimeras," and "aberrations." See E.A.D. to G.L.D., February 4, 1848 (D): "And Carlyle too has been showing himself up in that elaborate piece of fudge history, the Cromwellian letters. It is sad to read Fraser's magazine to see how he buries himself in it, nuzzling out a comfortable corner for himself in lubber land."

⁴¹The 1850 catalogue listed nine titles of Carlyle (with two copies of five of them), four titles of Jean Paul, and nine titles of Goethe in English, besides several volumes of his works in German. No less than three editions of the Autobiography were available.

⁴²See Literary World, VIII (November 15, 1851), 381-83; (November 22), 403-4.

Moxon's anecdotes of his friend.⁴³ What deficiencies there may have been in Melville's knowledge of Lamb at that time could soon have been remedied by reading the Works and Final Memorials with which Moxon presented him.⁴⁴ For some strange reason Melville had not until December, 1849, read the Confessions of an English Opium Eater. When he secured a copy in London, he read it speedily and with great enthusiasm.⁴⁵ The Duyckincks possessed a copy, which was lent in 1847, but which somehow has not survived.⁴⁶ The Literary World, however, had taken little notice of De Quincey until 1850, and in reprinting an article from Blackwoods in January of that year, the editors apologized for their neglect.⁴⁷ Several articles within the next few months indicated that the Duyckincks were at last awakened to a keen admiration for De Quincey.⁴⁸ Perhaps Melville's enthusiasm for the Opium Eater had something to do with calling his friends' attention to the neglected writer.

The Duyckincks were so thoroughly imbued with Dickens and his novels, as was nearly everyone else of the time, if newspaper and magazine allusions and articles are to be taken as any indica-

⁴³Journal, November 20 (M).

⁴⁴Journal, November 21, and list of books at end of volume (M).

⁴⁵Journal, December 22 and 23 (M).

⁴⁶Apparently very early in 1847 this volume was borrowed by one John Hamilton. The book is marked returned but there is no notation that anyone else borrowed it, although Duyckinck's record extends to 1866. Perhaps it was lost, for no Duyckinck copy of De Quincey published before 1850 has come down to the New York Public Library. The 1850 catalogue of the Society Library listed Opium Eater's Confessions anonymously under "Novels, Romances, and Tales," and had no entry for De Quincey in that part of the catalogue arranged alphabetically by authors.

⁴⁷See Literary World, VI (January 5, 1850), 13.

⁴⁸See especially articles, VI (May 18, 1850), 495-96; and VII (August 24, 1850), 151.

tion,⁴⁹ that Melville must have known a great deal about Dickens before he picked up Pickwick Papers on his voyage to London to read a few chapters by way of diversion.⁵⁰ The only Dickens volume borrowed from the Duyckincks that Melville might have read was David Copperfield, charged late in 1850 in the name of "Miss Melville" (presumably sister Augusta).⁵¹ Likewise Melville's borrowing of Roderick Random from the 20 Clinton Place library early in 1850⁵² can hardly be taken as evidence that he had not read that book before, and perhaps many other Smollett novels too.⁵³

Significant because the book was borrowed along with Rabelais and Sir Thomas Browne while Mardi was in progress, was Melville's reading of Frithiof's Saga by Esaias Tegner.⁵⁴ Besides casual references to whales⁵⁵ and packed allusions to Norse

⁴⁹Letters and notebooks of both Duyckincks and of other members of the group testify to their saturation with Dickens (D). See also Butler, A Retrospect of Forty Years, pp. 93 ff. The Willis and Morris Home Journal supplied Dombey and Son in monthly supplements from the fall of 1846 to the spring of 1848.

⁵⁰See Journal, October 20 (M).

⁵¹See E.A.D.'s "Books Lent" (D). This book must have been borrowed in the fall of 1850 or later, probably after the Melvilles moved to Pittsfield.

⁵²See E.A.D.'s "Books Lent" (D), Melville's first borrowing for 1850. No Duyckinck copy is now in the New York Public Library.

⁵³William Johnson, surgeon of the fleet, in Roderick Random has been suggested as the prototype of Cadwallader Cuticle in White Jacket. Smollett's novel may also have suggested Melville's picture of Cuticle's barbarous amputation; see Charles Anderson, "A Reply to Melville's White Jacket by Rear Admiral Thomas O. Selfridge, Sr.," American Literature, VII (May, 1935), 123-44.

⁵⁴See "Books Lent" (D). Borrowed early in 1848, or possibly as early as December, 1847. The Duyckincks had two copies: Frithiof, a Norwegian Story, trans. R. G. Latham (London: T. Hookham, 1838) and Frithiof's Saga (London: A. H. Bailey, 1835)--both of which are now, with the rest of the Duyckinck books, in the New York Public Library.

⁵⁵See, for instance, Canto X, in which the good ship Ellida cuts the whale in two.

mythology which are reflected often in Melville's choice of figures in Mardi, the saga presented the story of Frithiof's passionate constancy to Ingeborg, though their love--like Melville's for Yillah--seemed destined to be unfulfilled. Certainly the heroic style of parts of Mardi and of Moby Dick owed something to the bold measures of the Swedish poem.

Other books borrowed by Melville from his friend Duyckinck during this seven-year period present a wide range of literary interest. The picaresque romance, Lazarillo de Tormes,⁵⁶ and Scoggin's Jests⁵⁷ were included, as were also volumes of the Edinburgh Review, the Democratic Review, and Arcturus.⁵⁸ Once Melville felt inclined to read William Browne's Britannia's Pastorals.⁵⁹ Nineteenth century English and American literature were represented by Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Poems,⁶⁰ Tennyson's In Memoriam,⁶¹ Hawthorne's Twice-told Tales,⁶² and Thoreau's

⁵⁶See "Books Lent" (D). Borrowed apparently in the spring or summer of 1850, after Melville had purchased Guzman in London; see below. No Duyckinck copy of Lazarillo in English survives.

⁵⁷See "Books Lent" (D). Borrowed fairly early in 1850. The Duyckinck copy is Scoggin's Jests; Full of Witty Mirth, and Pleasant Shifts (London: W. Thackeray & J. Deacon, 1796).

⁵⁸Two volumes of the Edinburgh Review were borrowed in late summer, 1849; the other periodicals nearly a year later.

⁵⁹Borrowed in the spring or summer of 1850. The Duyckincks had a three volume edition of William Browne's works, the first two of which contained Britannia's Pastorals (London: T. Davies, 1772). The three volumes are now bound together but may have been separate when Melville read them.

⁶⁰Borrowed early in 1850. Possibly the reference is to Poems (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1844), two volumes. The Duyckincks also had in their library: The Seraphim, and Other Poems (London: Saunders & Otley, 1838); A Drama of Exile; and Other Poems (New York: H. G. Langley, 1845); and Prometheus Bound. Translated from the Greek of Aeschylus. And Miscellaneous Poems, by the Translator (London: A. J. Valpy, 1833).

⁶¹Borrowed in the spring or summer of 1850. The Duyckinck copy was the first edition (London: Edward Moxon, 1850).

⁶²Borrowed in late summer, 1849, just before Melville's

A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers.⁶³ Sylvester Judd's Margaret, "the New England transcendental descriptive book," as Duyckinck once called it,⁶⁴ and Mrs. Anne Marsh-Caldwell's Angela⁶⁵ found a place among his borrowings, though it can not be said certainly that Melville read them. They may have been borrowed for his wife or for sister Augusta.

Besides those already listed Melville's European purchases made in 1849 included Butler's Hudibras (a gift for Evert Duyckinck),⁶⁶ Boswell's Johnson,⁶⁷ volumes of Davenant and Chatterton,⁶⁸ a copy of Lavater,⁶⁹ numerous guide-books and similar publications,⁷⁰ and several novels and romances. The popular Spanish fiction, Guzman de Alfarache by Mateo Aleman,⁷¹ Fenelon's

trip to Europe. Probably this was the first edition (Boston: American Stationers Co., 1837) which was E.A.D.'s personal copy.

⁶³Borrowed summer of 1850. The Duyckinck copy (Boston: J. Munroe; New York: G. P. Putnam, 1850) contains some markings and a list of passages with page references noted on the fly leaf, which apparently were of especial interest.

⁶⁴Borrowed summer of 1850. No Duyckinck copy survives. See E.A.D. to G.L.D., May 15, 1848 (D). Margaret has been suggested as a contemporary source for the style of Pierre; see S. Foster Damon, "Pierre the Ambiguous," Hound and Horn, II (1929), 107-8.

⁶⁵This popular novel, borrowed sometime during 1848, may not have been read by Melville himself. No Duyckinck copy survives.

⁶⁶See Melville's letter to E.A.D., February 2, 1850 (D); Journal, November 17; and list of books at end of Journal (M).

⁶⁷See Journal, December 19, and book list (M). See also memoranda in back of Journal, apparently made on homeward voyage, about Johnson as an usher, and about reference to cannibals in Boswell.

⁶⁸See Journal, November 17, December 18, and book list (M).

⁶⁹See Journal, November 21 (M).

⁷⁰See book list in back of Journal for titles (M); at least four books on Rhine were included.

⁷¹See Journal, December 18, and book list (M).

Telemachus,⁷² and Madame de Stael's Corinne⁷³ were the only books in this last group not of English authorship. Walpole's Castle of Otranto, Beckford's Vathek, and Godwin's Caleb Williams represented the eighteenth century;⁷⁴ Thomas Hope's Anastasius; or Memoirs of a Greek and Mrs. Shelley's Frankenstein the nineteenth.⁷⁵ No systematic plan of buying is discernible; Melville apparently bought at random what he liked, trying at the same time to get particular books he had long wished to read.

All of the books Melville is known to have reviewed for the Literary World were American. Two novels by Cooper, Red Rover and The Sea Lions,⁷⁶ Parkman's The Oregon Trail,⁷⁷ and Hawthorne's Mosses from an Old Manse⁷⁸ are the only purely literary works included in the accepted list. It can never be known with certainty how many other reviews in this periodical were written by Melville; and it is probable that Melville wrote book notices for other magazines published in New York during his residence there.

Still surviving are a few books, now in the possession of his descendants, known to have been Melville's property. Not all of these books are inscribed with the date when Melville acquired them. A few however, by virtue of early publication dates or some

⁷²See Journal book list (M).

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid. Melville's Journal, December 16 (M), made mention of another eighteenth century work, Tristram Shandy, of which on that day he read a few chapters. He commented that this was a book which he had "never yet read."

⁷⁵See Journal book list (M). Melville secured a copy of Anastasius in Paris which was confiscated by customs officials when he returned to England; see Journal, December 13 (M). Apparently later, he secured another copy from Bentley.

⁷⁶Literary World, IV (April 28, 1850), 370; and VI (March 16, 1850), 276-77.

⁷⁷Literary World, IV (March 31, 1849), 291-93.

⁷⁸Literary World, VII (August 17, 1850), 125-27; (August 24), 145-47.

annotation, seem likely to have come into Melville's possession before 1851. These titles, therefore, may be added to the list of books bought, borrowed, and reviewed, to sketch the general outlines of Melville's reading during the years 1844 to 1851. Titles not already mentioned which meet the conditions suggested above are: Joseph Forsyth, Remarks on Antiquities, Arts, and Letters during an Excursion in Italy in the Years 1802 and 1803;⁷⁹ William Ellery Channing, Works, in a six volume edition;⁸⁰ The Poems and Ballads of Schiller, translated by Bulwer Lytton;⁸¹ The Biçou; or Annual of Literature and the Arts (1828);⁸² and a highly annotated and marked copy of The New Testament and the Psalms bearing the notation in Melville's hand, "From Aunt Jean 1846."⁸³ There is no certain indication that any of these books except the Testament and the Schiller were Melville's own property; the Channing, for instance, belonged to his wife; but Melville probably had opportunity to read all of them during this

⁷⁹A two volume work with some markings (London: John Murray, 1824). These volumes and those referred to in the next three footnotes are now the property of Melville's granddaughters, Mrs. Metcalf and Mrs. Osborne, and have been temporarily deposited by them in the Treasure Room of Harvard University Library.

⁸⁰Each volume (Boston: James Munroe & Co., 1848) is inscribed "Elizabeth, with the best wishes of her affectionate father Lemuel Shaw." There are a number of markings, but nothing to indicate the exact date of the gift.

⁸¹Vol. LIX ("Collection of British Authors"; Leipzig: Bernh. Tauchnitz Jun., 1844); inscribed "H. Melville N.Y. 1849." Other markings and inscriptions indicate that Melville reread the book on the trip around Cape Horn in 1860.

⁸²This book (London: William Pickering, 1828) contains selections from Mrs. Hemans, Lockhart, Coleridge, Lamb, and numerous minor authors of the early part of the century.

⁸³This edition published New York: American Bible Society, 1844. For some account of annotations, etc., see William Braswell, "Herman Melville and Christianity," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Department of English, University of Chicago, 1934, *passim*.

seven-year period.

Since any study of Melville's cultural or literary background for the seven-year period from 1844 to 1851 must become in some respects an account of his preparation for the writing of Moby Dick, books on the sea and voyaging, on whales and whaling, read during these years deserve especial consideration. His own experiences must have made him interested in this kind of reading even before he resolved to write a book like Moby Dick. He borrowed from Duyckinck late in 1847 Charles H. Barnard's Narrative of the Sufferings and Adventures in a Voyage around the World.⁸⁴ For the Literary World, Melville reviewed J. Ross Browne's Etchings of a Whaling Cruise,⁸⁵ and was asked to review Joseph C. Hart's Romance of Yachting and probably many other books having some relation to the sea.⁸⁶ Assuredly various books dealing with whales and the whale fishery which were reviewed in the Duyckinck periodical were more forcefully brought to his attention by reason of that fact.⁸⁷

The problem of Melville's reading and its effect upon his

⁸⁴See "Books Lent" (D). Entry occurs soon after first borrowing of Rabelais. Notation seems to indicate Melville borrowed copy belonging to George Tomes.

⁸⁵I (March 6, 1847), 105-6.

⁸⁶See Melville's letter to E.A.D., November 11, 1848 (D); partially printed in Minnigerode, pp. 30-31. A comparison of the wording of Melville's comments on the book, which he refused to review, with the phraseology of the published review, Literary World, III (December 2, 1848), 872, shows that Duyckinck leaned heavily on Melville's opinion of the book in shaping his notice of it. Normally there would be no correspondence about books Melville was asked to review; so there is no way to estimate how much of this work, particularly for books about the sea, Melville did for his friend.

⁸⁷Melville was indebted to the Reverend Henry T. Cheever's The Whale and his Captors (New York: Harper & Bros., 1849), which was reviewed in the Literary World, VI (January 5, 1850), 11, for many of the "Extracts" in Moby Dick, and for other suggestions incorporated in that book.

writing is too large to receive full treatment here; it is, however, both interesting and instructive to assemble all known records of just what Melville read during this important seven-year period. With this external evidence at hand, it is possible to evaluate and interpret more clearly allusion, quotation, citation, and other indications of literary indebtedness which appear in Melville's works produced during the years from 1844 to 1851.

